

SOFTWARE FOR RESTRICTING
OTHER SOFTWARE TO BE USED
BY THE USER ONLY

SOFTWARE FOR PREVENTING
OTHER SOFTWARE FROM
UNAUTHORISED USE

-1-

~~Identity software for restricting software supplied through
a communication link or the like to be used on one computer
and method therefor~~

Field of the invention

The present invention relates to protection of commercial software sold through a communication link or the like, and particularly, to protection of such software against unauthorised use.

supplied (readable on
P.3, item 3i,
last line.)
and
(readable on P.3,
under the heading
"Detailed Description
of the preferred
embodiments",
line 1)

Background of the invention

Conventionally, software protection methods for protecting commercial software products such as programs, multimedia ^a software, sold ^{supplied} through a communication link, such as telephone line ~~by means of modem~~, requires a user computer to ^{have piece of} install a hardware means which comprises, for instance, decryption keys ^{be installed} and system therein for to be authenticated by a software ^{program on the computer} running thereon. Hardware means, rather than software means, are being used because software duplication facilities are commonly found in personal computers. However, this is extremely cumbersome and places a large burden on users and vendors alike.

It is therefore an object of the present invention to provide a ^{piece of} software means to replace the above-mentioned hardware means and ~~which would not be copied by its~~ ^{is being discouraged from copying it} rightful user to someone else.

~~It is therefore another object of the present invention to provide a method for
detering unauthorised copying or use of the software means.~~

Summary of the invention

According to a first embodiment of the present invention, there is provided a central program comprising 1) a program for providing ^{an} Encrypted Identity ^{to} (hereinbelow referred ^{authorising use of a} as EI program), 2) a program for enabling software

product (hereinbelow referred ^{to} as ES program), 3) a program for authenticating ^{user} computer (hereinbelow referred ^{to} as AC program).

The central program is for managing the use of the individual programs therein so that the ES program can be protected from being ~~accessed by the user directly,~~ ~~thereby preventing it to be~~ copied individually. The EI program is for providing an encrypted identity of a user for accessing a network central computer to obtain services or software products or alike in which a secure operation ^{on} of a user account for payment therefor involved. The AC program is for authenticating the computer on which it runs by determining its ^{the} hardware and software configuration ^{as well as hardware characteristic of the computer} by software means and comparing the result with that required. The ES program is for using the authentication result of the AC program and the ^{presence} present of the EI program as a precondition ^{authorizing} for enabling those software ^{products} obtained to run ^{be used (readable on P.5 item 3ii)} on a computer. (readable on P.7, line 2)

It should be noted that in the central program, the ES program is the one which ^{as far as protection of the software products from being unlawfully copied by the rightful user to someone else is concerned,} needs protection ~~most whereas the EI program needs least~~ and according to the present invention, the ES program is protected from being unauthorised copied by its rightful user to someone else lies on the fact that a ^{rightful} user would not copy a program (i.e., the EI program), which can provide ^{rightful} the user's encrypted identity for using the user's account in obtaining, for eg., network services or software products. As seen from the use of automatic teller machine(ATM) magnetic cards, which although can ^{be} readily ^{been} forged, has ^{remarkably} proved to be ~~remarkably~~ secure.

According to a second embodiment of the present invention, the central program comprising ^{only,} the EI program and the ES program ^{authorises the} enables software ~~runs~~ ^{products to be used} only when the EI program is present on the same computer ^{and being} which is determined by receiving an encrypted identity of the EI program from the same.

According to ^a the third embodiment, the EI and ES programs are basically equivalent such that copying the ES program by its rightful user to someone else is equivalent to copying the EI program ^{to someone else}, thereby preventing the ES program from unauthorised copied or use.

Brief ^edescription of drawings

FIG.1 is a block diagram of ^{the} central program.

FIG.2 is a diagrammatic view of a program in which a part B thereof being encrypted, in RAM space.

Detailed description of the preferred embodiments

The present invention is directed to protecting software ^{product(s)} supplied through a communication link, and for the sake of simplicity, the following description is directed to protection of such software ^{product(s)} in a IBM PC computer. And, the present invention will ^{against unauthorised copying and use} be described under the following headings: ^{users}

- 1) The Central Program.
- 2) The Program for providing ^{an} Encrypted Identity (EI program).
- 3) The Program for ^{authorising use of a} enabling software ^{product} (ES program).
- 4) The Program for authenticating ^{user} computer (AC program).
- 5) Other Embodiments.

1) The Central Program.

According to the first embodiment, there is provided a central program which being an executable program and can be caused to ^{be executed a)} execution by user by entering its filename in DOS environment, ^{b) by a running program} refer to FIG.1 which is a block diagram of the central program.

- ^{If} a) When a user desires to access a network central computer through a communication link, the user has first to cause ^{the central program} it to ~~execute~~. ^{be executed} It will request the user to enter a password which if coincident with that required, it will send an identity of the user to the central computer.

~~This requirement of user password is necessary to prevent someone to access the central computer and use the account of the rightful user without his authorisation.~~

, of which details will be described herein belows,

-4-

Then the central program ^{will} causes the EI program ^{be} to execute ^d for providing an encrypted identity of the user, ~~that encrypted identity will also be send~~ to the central computer. The central computer will permit the access request from the user if the ~~encrypted identity is correct, for which details will be described in item 2 herein belows.~~ ^{encrypted and encrypted identities are consistent with each other.}

- b) When a running program desires to ^{cause} ~~execute~~ the ES program ^{to be executed,} to ~~enables, its~~ ^{authorise} operation or it to continue to run, it ^{will} first prepares an input parameter for indicating to the ES ^{central} program such a request and stores the input parameter in a predetermined location in RAM, then through the use of a PC DOS service ^{call} for that purpose, it causes the central program to be ~~download from a permanent storage, eg. harddisk, of the computer to RAM and be executed.~~ The central program will first access the input parameter in the predetermined location and from it the central program can determined that ^a the ^{is} running program ^{ing} requests for an ~~enable signal~~ ^{authorisation command} from the ES program, and will then cause the ES program to ^{be} execute ^d.

^{valid} For the case the central program is ^{being} caused by user to be executed, there will be no ^{central} or no ~~valid~~ input parameter and the ~~control~~ program can thus know this fact.

- ^{an} 2) The Program for providing Encrypted Identity (EI program). ^{for identity authentication}

This program borrows the technique used in IC credit card in which an encrypted identity is generated ~~for identity authentication.~~

When ^{an} starts, the EI program sends ^{the} a access request to ^{will} a central computer which in return will send back a random number. The EI program then encrypts the random number with a predetermined algorithm A1 and sends the result to the central computer which will permit access if the result is identical with ^{another} the result it obtained by performing the same encryption. ^{algorithm on that random number}

It should be noted that for each user, there is a corresponding respective encryption algorithm A1 ^{the} for ^{thereof} identification of each of them and also that the central computer may use the encryption result, ^{if it being correct,} if it being correct, from the EI program as a

user authorisation for payment to be made, from a user account for obtaining network services or software products or the like.

3) The Program for ^{authorising use of a} ~~enabling~~ ^{product} software' (ES program).

According to the present invention, there are 2 approaches for ^{authorising use of a} ~~enabling~~ ^{product} software:

i) by sending encrypted commands to a running software ^{program} for ^{authorising continuous use} ~~enabling~~ operation of the same on ^a the computer by the technique as mentioned ^{above} in item 2. Specifically, the running software ^{program} includes in the input parameter, as mentioned ^{b)} above in item 1, a random number it generated. The ES program, ^{then causes the central program to be executed.} in return sends the result it obtained by performing a predetermined encryption algorithm A2 on that random number, to the ^{program} running software ^{the result} which will compare ^{another} it with the result it obtained by performing the same encryption: ^{algorithm A2 on that random number}

It should be noted that for each user, each ^{products} one of the software for use on his/her computer(s) use a same respective encryption algorithm A2 and the encryption algorithm A2 being included into each such ^{software product} one by the central computer at the time when the central computer is to supply the same to the user computer.

ii) by ^{an} decrypting ^{product} a encrypted part of a software ^{product} or an encrypted software: ^{product}

It should be noted that if the software ^{product} is a program, then it will be sufficient to have a part thereof to be encrypted, for preventing unauthorised copy ^{ing} and use, however, if the software ^{product} is an audio/visual multimediam ^a data file, it ^{should} will be more desirable to have the whole software ^{product} be encrypted.

The ^{product} decryption of a part of or an entire software takes place on a temporary copy of which in RAM. Given by example only, FIG. 2 is a diagrammatic view of a program in RAM space, with a part B thereof being encrypted. As seen, the ES program decrypts part ^B and stores the result which size should be not equivalent to that of the encrypted ^{copy} origin, in 'part B decrypted'.

The ES program then overwrites at the first location of 'part B encrypted' an instruction 'JUMP TO part B de~~sc~~rypted' and at the end of 'part B de~~sc~~rypted' appends an instruction 'JUMP TO part C'. In this way, the encrypted part of the software will not be executed and ^{the} its de~~sc~~rypted part will be executed instead.

In the case of audio/visual multimedia^a software, the software will be de~~sc~~rypted a small part by a small part and each small part is de~~sc~~rypted at the time it is about to be utilized by a audio/visual program for causing audio/visual effect. In other words, that audio/visual program has to cause the ES program to be executed in the manner as described above in item 1,^{b)} everytime it wants a de~~sc~~ryption of a small part. ^{Desirably} Desirable, a newly de~~sc~~rypted small part will overwrite a ^{previously} previous de~~sc~~rypted one so that a whole copy of the de~~sc~~rypted software will not exist in RAM.

4) The Program for authenticating^{user} computer (AC program).

One object of this program is to prevent the central program from being used , if it ^{being} is a copy being made by someone other than the rightful user and of this the rightful user being unaware^d, so that a rightful user need not guard his computer containing the central program from reach of someone else.

When the central program is^{being} installed in a harddisk of a user computer and executed, it will check ^{an} a encrypted status information^{stored} in it^{itself} and from which it knows this is the first time it being executed and will cause an initialization process to take place. In the initialization process, the central program sends to ^{the} a central computer^{as mentioned above in item 2,} an unencrypted identity of the user, then the AC program requests for ^{an} a encrypted command from ^{the} a central computer which will provide such ^{an} a encrypted command, in the manner as described hereinabove in item 3i, if the user has a valid account or the account is not closed.

After authenticating the command, the AC program determines the hardware and software configuration of the user computer, which includes, for eg., running speed determination which is a function of CPU frequency, cache memory size etc;

number and identities of peripherals such as mouse, printer, joystick, harddisk and floppy disk drive etc; characteristics of hardware such as number of heads, cylinders, sectors of harddisk and locations of bad sectors therein; version number of operation system software and physical position of a particular software^{product} including the central program in the harddisk; by skills well known to those in the art. For instance, the running speed can be determined by ~~and~~ causing the computer to execute a test program and initializing a hardware counter to measure the time the computer has taken to finish^{executing} the program. For another instance, the version number of the operation system may be determined by using a particular DOS service.^{call}

The result of the determination and a status information^{indicative} of being initialized is being stored by the AC program in a predetermined part of the central program^{the central program} in the ^{in the harddisk} form of encrypted data. Thereafter, everytime when the central program is executed, it will first check the status information, and after ^{determining} confirming that it is being initialized, it will perform a job as requested, ^{as mentioned in above} referred to item 1, and in addition thereto, it will also automatically cause the AC program to ^{be} execute which will determine^d at least a part of the ^{mentioned} above hardware and software configuration^{as well as hardware characteristics} of the computer, at a time, and the AC program will encrypt an indication^{information} in another predetermined part of the central program for causing the ES program not to operate, if any^{part} of the configuration^{characteristics} determined is not identical to^{the corresponding part of} that it encrypted and stored previously.

In addition thereto, the AC program will also reset the encrypted status information so that another initialization process will automatically take place ^{when} if the user causes the central program to be executed, ^{and the authorization of} for which another encrypted command from the central computer will be required.^{for}

This^{also} prevents a user^{from} deliberately adapting^{ing} the program to ^{central} other user's computer,^{of other users} after closing his account.

In addition, the encrypted command from the central computer may ~~be~~ alternatively be supplied to the user via, eg.,^a telephone line, and ^{then} being^{an} entered into the user computer by the user. Specifically, to request for a encrypted command, the AC

and conveys the random number to the user who then in turn supplies it

program generates a random number which is being supplied to the central computer by the user by means of telephone dual tone signals, generated by entering the random number on a telephone keypad, through ^{the} telephone lines, and after encrypting the random number, the central computer sends the result to the user via the same telephone line by means of a voice synthesizer.

5) Other Embodiments

According to the second embodiment, the ES program is separate^d from the central program which comprises the EI and ~~AC~~^{only} program. The ES program is bound ^{to} with the EI program by requiring the ES program to operate only when the EI program is present on the same computer. Specifically, the ES program when running, can cause the EI program to be executed for generating an encrypted identity for the ES program to authenticate. The EI program knows that this is a request for encrypted identity from the ES program, not a request from user for encrypted identity for accessing ^{the} a central computer, by the technique of input parameter as mentioned above. ^{in item 1b}

Further, the EI program before sending the encrypted identity to the ES program, may first check the data integrity of itself by, for instance, checksum method. Alternatively, it may also be that the ES program performs the checking. And, ^{if} the checking result is that some data in the EI program being altered^{, then}, ^{be} Then, in the former case, the ES will be caused to ^{be} not operable by the EI program by not sending it ^{an} a encrypted identity, and in the latter case, the ES program will ^{be} caused to ^{be} not operable by itself.

According to the third embodiment, the encryption algorithms A1 and A2 that the EI and ES programs use respectively for providing ^{an} encrypted identity to the central computer and for generating encrypted commands to ^{authorize use of a software product.} ~~enable running software~~ respectively, is a same algorithm.

Thus, it would be equivalent for a rightful user to copy his EI program to someone else if he copies his ES program to someone else. In this case, a slight

modification on the ES program can make it ^{equivalent to} operate in the same manner as the EI program, ^{and} which involves adding a simply ^e interface program for receiving a random number from ^{the} a central computer, feeding the random number into the ES program, receiving the ^{encryption} encryption result from the ES program and supplying the ^{encryption} encryption result to the central computer, and such functions are commonly found in any network interface software.

In addition, according to another embodiment of the present invention, the software ^{products} and ES program ^{each} for use on a particular user's computer includes an identity of its rightful user, so as ^{to} for facilitates legal action against piracy. Further, the ES program ^{when executed, will} accesses software ^{products}, by using a particular DOS service ^{call} for loading a ^{software product} program ^{from hard disk to RAM} from ^{each of the} hard disk to RAM, stored in the computer on which it runs ^{checking} for such an identity therein, if any software is found to have an identity not identical to that of the ES program, the ES program will inhibit use of all software ^{products} under its control, including itself, on the computer. Such identities may be stored in a predetermined location of the software ^{products}, and is protected from being altered by having an encrypted one stored in another location in each software ^{products}, and ^{each of these} said another location ^{is different} differs to each another in different software ^{products} so that it would not discovered and altered. And, each such software ^{product}, when executed, will automatically check the unencrypted identity stored therein against the ^{decryption result of the} encrypted one, if they are not ^{consistent} identical, the software ^{product} will fail to operate. The identity or encrypted identity of the rightful user being included into each ^{products} one of the software by the central computer at the time when the central computer is to supply the same to the user computer. Further, to prevent the ES program ^{from} mistakenly regard ^{ing} a software ^{product} which stored in the computer and which being not supplied from the central computer, be a software ^{product} under its control, the central ^{computer} may ^{further} include ^{another} information in ^{each} a predetermined location of the software ^{product} for indicating this ^{that is, the software product being supplied from the central computer,} fact to the ES program and each ^{one of the} software ^{product} will not operate if when being executed, it finds ^{that} the information therein being altered.